***How Language Conveys Emotion***

In addition to conveying a theme, poems also often use language to create a powerful image or emotion. After looking at how poets use language to convey an emotion or a picture, you'll be ready to put your understanding of the action and the language together to understand the meaning of a poem.

**How Language Conveys Emotion Practice and Answers**

Take a look at the following poem by British poet Alfred Lord Tennyson as an example of how language can convey a strong feeling by conveying an image or picture. Read "The Eagle" twice out loud—remember, poetry is meant to be heard, not just seen. Then mark it up and write your observations in the margin.

**The Eagle**

He clasps the crag with crooked hands; *crag* = *steep*

Close to the sun in lonely lands, *or rugged rock*

Ringed with the azure world, he stands. *azure* = *sky blue*

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;

He watches from his mountain walls,

And like a thunderbolt he falls.

**Practice**

What did you notice about the language in this poem? Did you notice the rhyme in each stanza—*hands*, *lands*, *stands* and *crawls*, *walls*, *falls*? Did you notice the repetition of the "k" sound in clasps, crag, and crooked? This repetition of sounds (especially at the beginning of words) is called *alliteration*.

1. Which other line of this poem uses alliteration?
   1. line 2
   2. line 3
   3. line 6

You may have noticed another poetic device at work in this poem. In line 1, the poet tells us that the eagle ("he") "clasps" the rock "with crooked hands." Do eagles have hands? No, they do not, but Tennyson gives the eagle human characteristics. When an animal is given human characteristics, or when an inanimate thing (like a rock, for example) is given animate characteristics (human or animal), it is called *personification*.

1. Which other line of this poem uses personification?
   1. line 2
   2. line 4
   3. line 6

Here's a memory test:

1. Line 6, "And like a thunderbolt he falls," uses which of the following poetic devices?
   1. personification
   2. simile
   3. irony

What is the effect of this comparison?

1. The comparison of the eagle to a thunderbolt makes the reader think of the eagle as
   1. a weak, timid creature.
   2. an unpredictable creature.
   3. a powerful, fast creature.

## ****Action + Language = Theme****

In the final poem for today, by American poet Stephen Crane, see if you can determine the theme of the poem by looking at both the action of the poem and its language (diction, style, and tone). As before, begin by reading the poem carefully, first out loud and then with pen in hand.

### ****Action + Language = Theme Practice and Answers****

**A Man Said to the Universe**

A man said to the universe:

"Sir, I exist!"

"However," replied the universe,

"The fact has not created in me

A sense of obligation."

#### ****Practice****

1. Which sentence best summarizes the theme of this poem?
   1. The universe is too big for humanity.
   2. The universe is indifferent to humanity.
   3. Humanity has an obligation to the universe.
2. Which of the following best describes the tone of this poem?
   1. warm, caring
   2. hot, angry
   3. cold, formal

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